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The CIA has publicly stated that it never interviewed Lee Harvey Oswald. Numerous allegations have arisen over the years since President Kennedy's assassination that Oswald either had been or should have been debriefed by the CIA upon his return from the Soviet Union since he appeared to be in a position to provide useful information due to the unusual duration of his residence and employment there. The claim that no records exist which indicate a debriefing of Oswald has stimulated speculation that Oswald may have had some kind of Agency relationship either because the contact was not reported through normal channels or because the CIA communicated with Oswald in another manner which eliminated the necessity for a routine debriefing.

The HSCA attempted to determine: 1) whether Oswald was, in fact, interviewed by the CIA upon his return from the Soviet Union; 2) whether there is an official report of the interview if one was conducted; and 3) the reasons why Oswald would not have been interviewed if that was, in fact, the case.

RETURN TO CIA
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In response to the Warren Commission's request of

John E. Melone, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, submitted

an affidavit stating that the CIA had had no relationship

of any kind with Lee Harvey Oswald. ^{The affidavit,} ~~See this~~ dated 18 May 1964,

~~stated~~ that "The Agency never contacted him, interviewed him,

talked with him, or received or selected any reports or information

from him, or communicated with him, directly or indirectly, in

(SAC 566, 17d 566)

~~any other manner.~~" ^{In} Mr. Melone's testimony before the Warren Com-

mission on May 14, 1964, ~~he~~ gave the same report.

~~He~~ ^{He} made ~~He~~ ^{He} the same assertion ~~as to~~ ^{as to} the Agency's lack of contact

with Oswald. ^{specifically} When Melone was asked whether the CIA had had

any contact with Oswald during his stay in the Soviet Union,

Melone replied, "No; not to my knowledge, nor to the knowledge

of those who would have been in a position to have made such

(Warren Commission Hearings, Exhibit 5H 123)

contact, nor according to any record we have." He also responded

negatively to the question of whether the CIA had any personal contact

with Oswald subsequent to his return to the United States. (*Ibid.*)

McLoone's affidavit was ~~partially~~ mitigated by the appearance of
an article on 28 February 1964 in the Northern Virginia Sun which
made the following allegation:
~~alleged that "State Department records show that Oswald had several~~
~~meetings with the CIA representative in the U.S. embassy in Moscow.~~

During this period, the assassin was seeking to renounce his citizenship.

One State Department cable, No. 234, dated November 2, 1959, reports that

Oswald was interviewed by the CIA and other embassy officials (CIA FOIA Docu-
ment #609-736).

The CIA memorandum reporting this information, dated internally 22

to the Kennedy Commission advises that this allegation is totally unfounded.

(vid. vid. CIA FOIA Document #610-263). The memorandum explains that the

reference to the State Department "table" is erroneous and that the document

to which the article refers is undoubtedly a State Department

"despatch", No. 234, which was dated 2 November 1959, from the U.S. embassy

in Moscow. (vid.) (not a new paragraph)

According to the internal memorandum, the despatch contained no state-

ment indicating that Robert E. Snyder, who was the Second Secretary of the

U.S. embassy in Moscow and the only person mentioned by name is

~~He departed, did any CIA connection. (1/15/78)~~

However, the memorandum acknowledged that both Snyder and Edward

Greens, the State Department official who signed the deposit, had

had some past connection with the Agency. Snyder had been employed

by the CIA for less than one year in 1950 when he resigned in order

to assume a position with the State Department. ~~Although the CIA's
records indicate the existence of~~

~~actually been employed by the~~ a history of Agency interest in

~~Greens, he was never actually employed by the CIA. (1/15/78)~~

The record of the Central Intelligence Agency throughout the years

is inconsistent with its position ^{as stated} to the House Commission

that the CIA never interviewed Lee Harvey Oswald. A 9 February

1972 letter from Bernard Fensterwald to the Assistant Director of

the CIA requests any records pertaining to a debriefing of Oswald

by or on behalf of the CIA following his return from the Soviet

Union. This request for information contrary to the Agency's previously

~~as stated~~ stated position appears to be generated by a statement made by

Richard Helms on 14 April 1971 before the American Society of Newspaper

Editors that "... if there is a chance that if a private citizen travelling

abroad does require foreign information that can be useful to the

American policymaker, we are certainly going to try to interview

(CIAFOIA doc # 961-927-A6).

In a Fensterwald letter Oswald is appearing to be such a person.

There follows an exchange of letters between Fensterwald and

Argus M. Thuermer who was then Assistant to the Director of the CIA

in which Thuermer refers Fensterwald to the testimony of McCone and

Harms before the Warren Commission. Thuermer states that the testimony
is still valid; therefore the information you request does not exist. (CIA FOIA
LIC 7362-227-
AM) ^{12/25/75}

However, when Frostowald responds to this answer with a request for
Thuermer's own position with respect to the records rather than "conclu-
sions based upon statements of persons other than yourself," Thuermer
ends the exchange by stating that his previous response was
"a simple declarative statement in the most possible extensity that
the Agency never did any contact with Oswald and that, therefore,
the information sought by you in your letter of February 9th does
not exist and never did exist." (CIA FOIA doc #736-727-AP).

In April of 1978, the HSCA requested that the CIA provide a state-
ment as to whether Lee Harvey Oswald was ever contacted, spoken to
or interviewed by anyone directly or indirectly representing the CIA.
^{HSCA Letter to CIA, 4/16/78.}

The Agency responded in the same manner it had used in responding to
previous requests from other sources, by way of referring the committee
to the testimony of Helms and McCloskey before the Warren Commission and to Melvin
Appel's affidavit denying any Agency contact with Oswald. (CIA Statements Regarding and Con-
cerning the Lee Harvey Oswald Case, 4/16/78).

On 25 November 1963 CIA Memorandum (now located in USA's

con file at CIA FOIA #435-173-A) is the only documented evidence

of any CIA interest in interviewing Oswald. ^{The memorandum written} ~~The memorandum written~~

Thomas B. Cassini, stated: "As soon as I had heard Oswald's

name, I recalled that as Chief of the 6 Bureau I had discussed ^{sometime} ~~sometime~~ with

^{In Summer} ~~In the~~ 1960 - with the then Chief and Deputy Chief of the 6 Research

Section the laying on of interviews through ~~the Bureau~~ or other suitable

channels. At the moment I don't recall if this was discussed while

Oswald and his family were en route to this country or if it was

after their arrival" (CIA FOIA Document #435-173-A).

(Cassini) was interviewed by ^{the} HSCA staff members on August 17, 1978.

In this interview, he stated that he worked as Chief of the 6 Bureau

from September 1960 until his reassignment in September 1962. ^(See Staff Interviews of CIA Employees) ^{3/7/73, p. 1}

advised that the function of the 6 Bureau was to analyze information

from defectors concerning details about Soviet life which could

then be used to assist persons working inside the Soviet Union. (*Ibid.*)

The 6 Branch also relied upon the CIA's Contacts Division and

the FBI as sources of this type of information, as well as collecting
information from the State Department and the press concerning
activities in the Soviet Union. (*Ibid.*, p 4)

During this interview, (Casasius) recollection of the discussion

noted in the 25 November 1963 memo was that it took place

during the last days of his travel with the 6 Branch. This would
(*Ibid.*, p 4)

have placed the discussion sometime in July 1962. He stated that the

date noted for the discussion in the memo must have been incor-

rectous as he was travelling with his family between assignments

in the summer of 1960 and did not begin his assignment with

the 6 Branch until September of that year. (*Ibid.*, pp 4-5)

(Casasius) stated that at the time the Oswald case was discussed,

he assumed that Oswald must have been sent out of the Soviet

Union by the KGB. Therefore, exercising caution, he did not attempt

to debrief Oswald but suggested that Oswald be debriefed by (XURUMP)

which represented the Office of Operations, an office which debriefed

persons through its Intacts Division or "other suitable channels"

by which she meant the FBI or the Immigration and Naturalization

(Ibid., pp. 4-5)

Service. She ^{stated that} did not believe that this had been done at

that time because ^{this} type of information would have been routinely

passed on to the CIA and to this section if such a debriefing had

(Ibid., p. 5)

occurred. (Information she had on Oswald at the time was in

the form of State Department dispatches. (Ibid.)

In the memorandum, (Casas) states that he told his subordinates

something to the effect of "Don't push too hard to get the information

(IA FOIA Document #435-173-A).

we need, because this individual looks odd." He explained in the

interview that this statement reflected the CIA's assessment of

Oswald based on the unusual facts that Oswald was permitted by

the Soviets to remain in the USSR and was further permitted to marry

a Soviet citizen. (HSCA Staff Testimony of CIA Employee, 5/17/75, p. 5.)

(Lever) stated that his interest in Oswald as expressed in the

memorandum was just a lead and that it was not unusual that the

lead was as follow-up regarding a briefing of Oswald. He wrote
^(Ibid., p. 9)

no memo at the time of the discussion as it was not customary to write

memos regarding leads that were discussed and subsequently left

discussed as being ~~of little~~
~~expressed decreasing importance.~~ (Ibid.)

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(Walter P. Hattigan), the person to whom (Lansing) 25 November 1963

letter was written, was then employed by the CIA as Chief of

(HSCA Staff Interview of CIA employee, 6/13/73, p.1) (Hattigan's) responsibility was in
the Soviet section of the Paris station. (Ibid.)

Interview with HSCA staff member (not because of the nature of)

(Lansing) position under (non-official) cover. (Lansing) frequently

wrote informal memos such as the one in FDIA #435-173-A which

were then passed on through the use of cut-outs to the (Paris station). (Ibid.)

These memoranda would then be forwarded to CIA Headquarters,

generally by (Hattigan). However, in this particular instance, Robert G.

(Kempf), who served under (Hattigan) received and forwarded

the memorandum to Headquarters as (Hattigan) was in the hospital.
(Ibid.)

In (Hattigan) (Ibid.)

(Hattigan) expressed the general Agency opinion that had the CIA

wanted to contact a returning defector, it would have done so through

the Contacts Division of the
Office of Operations but that it was not standard operating

procedure to interview returning defectors
because this job fell within the FBI's

jurisdiction. (Ibid., p.2)

T_(Jones) also told the HSCB

(Lasswell) stated that the CIA had a specific interest in Russia

^{as it was} known that the city contained some type of special design plants

but may have involved aviation, nuclear energy or bacteriological

^{Interview of CIA employee, pp. 5-6).}

(Lasswell) believed

consequently, although he did not believe that LHO were

working in any type of security facility, anyone would have been in

he believed that

working in any type of security facility anyone would have been in

the area of these plants would have been of interest to the Agency. (Ibid., p. 6).

However, even with the presence of the design plants, Moscow was

not identified as a security or military priority area. (Ibid.)

(Lasswell) believed that the CIA maintained a large volume of

information on the Birok radio factory in which Dovzod worked, ^(Ibid.) this

information was stored in the Office of Research and Reporting. This information

was corroborated by another CIA employee, another former CIA employee,

(Dovzod Dovzodya) who worked in the Foreign Documents Division

in the Soviet branch of the Directorate of Intelligence in 1962.

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tell the HSCA that he specifically recalled collecting intelligence

regarding the Moscow Radio Plant. (HSCA 1st Testimony of CIA employee, 9/26/78, p.1).

In fact, [Deasy] claims that, during the summer of 1962, he received

a contact report from representatives of the CIA's New York field

office who interviewed a former Marine who had worked at the

Moscow Radio Plant following his defection to the USSR. (Ibid.) This

person, who [Deasy] believes may have been Oswald, had been living

with his family in Moscow. (Ibid.) [Deasy] advised the Committee that

the contact report was filed in a volume concerning the Moscow Radio Plant

which should be retrievable from the Industrial Registry Bureau, which was

then a component of the Office of Central Revenue (OCR). (Ibid.)

The HSCA requested that the CIA provide the Committee with the above-

described contact report and the volume of materials concerning the Moscow

Radio Plant. (HSCA Exhibit 57, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 110th, 111st, 112nd, 113rd, 114th, 115th, 116th, 117th, 118th, 119th, 120th, 121st, 122nd, 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th, 128th, 129th, 130th, 131st, 132nd, 133rd, 134th, 135th, 136th, 137th, 138th, 139th, 140th, 141st, 142nd, 143rd, 144th, 145th, 146th, 147th, 148th, 149th, 150th, 151st, 152nd, 153rd, 154th, 155th, 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The file review did indicate that in 1975, Daniel Selow had

made a similar request and was informed by the CIA that no such

report existed. (*Ibid.*)

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The Select Committee on Assassinations requested that the Central

Intelligence Agency provide a written statement indicating whether

^{the CIA} ~~whether~~, from 1958-1963, interviewed or debriefed returning American

defectors to the Soviet Union as a matter of standard operating

(NSCIA Letter to CIA, 4/5/78)

procedure. The agency was also requested to indicate the circum-

stances under which an interview would be initiated if such inter-

views were not conducted as standard operating procedure. (Ibid.)

The agency's response indicated that the Counterintelligence Staff

reviewed the files of 117 persons who had "defected" to the USSR

between 1958 and 1963 and who had subsequently returned to the United

(CIA Memorandum B. Hugh Tavar to Special Assistant to DDCI for External Oversight, 4/20/78).

States. This review revealed that only ten of the 117 individuals had

been contacted ^{by my command} within the CIA ~~States~~ and that the CIA had no procedure for the systematic

(Ibid.) The agency maintained that debriefing of such persons, ^{in addition} to the contacts that were initiated ap-

peared to be based on opportunity and circumstance" (Ibid.)

Another memorandum explained that the CIA had no standard

operating procedure with respect to debriefing returning American defectors

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as the Agency relied upon the FBI for reporting the results of interviews.

It may have conducted in connection with its responsibility for internal

(CIA Memorandum, Farvar to Special Asst. to DDCI for External Oversight, 5/25/78).

security matters. The Agency further stated that there were no manuals or

regulations for the period of 1958-1963 which specifically addressed the sub-

ject of American defectors. (Ibid.)

In fact, the ten persons with whom the CIA admitted having

had contact did not strictly meet the specific requirements as required

in the HSCA's request. Seven of the ten individuals had not actually

defected to the USSR during the period 1958-1963, but had resided

(CIA Memo from Tozer, 4/20/78)

there for at least two years prior to 1958. Three of the ten individuals

returned to the United States and were subsequently debriefed after 1963. (Ibid.)

The CIA employee who conducted the research in preparation for the

Agency's response told the HSCA that the requirements he had utilized in de-

riving at his conclusion did bear somewhat broader than those requested

in order to include all those persons regarded as defectors who were residing

in the Soviet Union during the time period in question, rather than just those who

actually defected at that time. (HSCA Interrogation of CIA Employee, 7/26/78).

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The House Select Committee on Assassinations conducted ~~to conduct~~ a review of defectors' files in order to determine whether defectors other than Oswald were routinely debriefed upon their return to the United States. The committee requested that the CIA provide a list of persons travelling to the Soviet Union during the period from 1958 to 1963, including both visitors and those persons considered by

the Agency to be "defectors". (See HSCA, #0541, CIA) The committee

was provided a computer listing of 380 individuals entitled "U.S.

Persons Who Have or May Have Defected to the USSR Between 1958-1963."

(Attachment to 27 January TEL memo, E. Hugh Jones to SA, L & E D) The Agency

stated that this listing represented ^{U.S. persons} individuals, including some non-

U.S. citizens who owed some measure of allegiance to the United States,

who had either defected ^{or} shown some intention of defecting to the

USSR ^{within} for the requested time period. (27 January 75 TEL memo, L & E D, CIA)

As this list was compiled from a more detailed computer program

on American defectors, a more detailed description concerning these

individuals was requested and provided in an expanded version of

the original list. This massive listing included the following infor-

ation where ~~available~~ ^{available or available} for each individual: name, date and place

of birth, 201 file number, ^{date} arrival in Soviet Union, departure

to Soviet Union, employment in Soviet Union, most current address,

and other miscellaneous information compiled from the individuals

201 file and/or third agency documents regarding this individual.

("Ex parte Committee to U.S. Citizens")

The Committee compiled a list of persons who appeared, from

the information available in the Agency's expanded list, to the U.S.

citizens still in the United States, who defected or attempted to defect

to the Soviet Union between the years of 1958 and 1963 and who re-

turned to the United States within the same period of time. ^{In addition,} ~~including~~ ^{including} the Committee included

clandestine ~~or~~ ^{or} those were individuals from an October 1960 State

request ^{for} Department ^{information} ~~submissions~~ information from the CIA regarding ^{those} persons whom

they considered to be defectors to the Soviet Union or Soviet Bloc countries.

125 letters to the State, Commerce, & Defense

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The HSCA requested files on twenty-nine individuals who fit the

above-described criteria and the CIA provided files on twenty-eight individuals

on whom they maintained records. ^{These} Both 201 files were reviewed as well

as any existing Domestic Contact Division files regarding these persons.

The HSCA file review revealed that, in the case of six of the individuals, there

is no indication that they ever returned to the United States. In some of

these cases, the files contained a report from a source who observed or spoke with

the subject and then reported the contact to the CIA, but there is no indica-

tion of direct contact with any of these persons on the part of the CIA

In regard to the other twenty-two defectors, the file review ^{shows first} indicated

that there is no record of CIA contact with eighteen of them. Again, four of these

files contain a report by a source who observed the agency of their contact <sup>(Kuwait
Russia
China)</sup>

One file regarding a former military person contains a report of a debriefing

conducted by military intelligence. ^(Russia)

The circumstances of the CIA's contact with the four remaining defectors

differs in each case. The file of one individual reflects that he had

actually been living in the USSR since 1933 and returned to the United

States in 1962. He was debriefed ^{in 1964} by a CIA officer ²⁹ (agent of)

(defector) after applying for employment in response to a newspaper ad-

vertisement. (Rev. of Interrogation) Another returning defector, Harold Latsyrell,

was reportedly interviewed by a CIA ^{officer} (in the American embassy) in Geneva

upon his departure from the Soviet Union en route to the United States.

While Latsyrell's file indicates that the Agency considered it desirable

that a full and watershed debriefing by the CIA and FBI be conducted

and Agent wrote to the FBI suggesting a joint debriefing, there is no

evidence in Latsyrell's 201 file nor in any DCA documents which suggest

further contact on the part of the CIA.

More extensive debriefings were conducted of the other two defectors. Robert

Webster, a plastic expert with the Reed Development Corporation whose

defection to the Soviet Union in 1959 was highly publicized, returned to the

United States in June of 1962. Webster had been employed in the

Soviet Union at the Kirovograd Scientific Institute of Plasticine Plastics.

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Slightly after his return to the United States, Webster was debriefed in his

home country by representatives from the CIA's Office of Operations and

in conjunction with representatives

SP-16 ~~and~~ ^{SOON} from the Air Force. It was decided that a more extensive

debriefing was in order and Webster was subsequently brought to the Washington,

D.C. area where he was debriefed for a period of two weeks. The debriefing

reports include a chronology of Webster's life and the CIA's assessment of

him as well as a large body of information regarding life in the Soviet

Union, Webster's work there and biographic information on persons he

met and during his residence there.

Likewise, Giacomo Giavardelli who had lived in the Soviet Union for

nearly four years, was contacted for purposes of debriefing ~~shortly~~ ^{soon} after

his return to the United States (late June of 1963). His initial debriefing

included such subjects as his motivation to defect to the USSR as well

as well as activities engaged in during his Moscow stay, relocation

from Moscow to Kiev and general aspects of life such as residence, activities

and costs. While the CIA felt it was preferable to brief Giavardelli

more thoroughly due to the current status of attempting to regain U.S. citizenship, the Agency expressed no interest in eliciting more information on such topics as cost of living, medical care, consumer goods, highways, transportation and restrictions upon travel within Kiev.

It becomes clear from the review of files on these defectors that debriefing of defectors ^{by the CIA} was, in fact, somewhat of a random occurrence. However, in the instances in which the Agency did choose to debrief returning American defectors, the Agency appeared to be interested in topics of general interest regarding life in certain areas of the Soviet Union. In this regard, the persons who were debriefed were similar to those in that they depicted and discussed ^{within} ~~within~~ the same general time period and place spent this time in the Soviet Union in areas of interest to the CIA.

It appears from examination of all available materials,

that Lee Harvey Oswald was not interviewed by the CIA following

his return to the United States from the Soviet Union. Although

persons in a branch of the Soviet Russia Division expressed an

interest in interviewing Oswald, they never followed up on this interest.

There is also no indication that the ^{Collection Division} ~~Counterintelligence~~ of the Office

of Operations interviewed Oswald.

While the CIA did conduct interviews of some tourists who

visited the Soviet Union during ^{the} period 1959-1963 as well as some

American citizens who defected to the Soviet Union and then returned to

the United States, there was no standard policy to interview all persons

in either category. Thus, the fact that Oswald was not interviewed

was more the rule than the exception according to procedures followed

by the CIA at that point in time.

HSCA was advised that at the time of
Oswald's return, there was many Soviet
citizens leaving USSR & defectors
program probably concentrated on 120.
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